

commentary

from other pens...

Child care system has long way to go

The Topeka Capital-Journal on foster care:
Secretary Janet Schalansky shrugs off suggestions that her state Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services has been — well, rehabilitated — and may now be better suited than even private contractors to handle the state's abused and neglected children. ... Critics say the contractors are having financial problems because the state has underfunded services for the children. ... Schalansky says, for one thing, that the private contractors agreed to perform certain services for certain amounts of money. ... Moreover, she says, foster homes, which more closely resemble family life, are preferable to group homes. ... As for the contractors' financial difficulties, Schalansky says dollar problems don't equate to service problems. ... In addition, she says early financial trouble is still showing up in headlines while the contractors' financial situation actually has improved. ... As for complaints that private case workers and SRS oversight workers sometimes clash, leading to confusion in juvenile court, Schalansky says they're working on that — but that having differing viewpoints on how best to care for kids isn't necessarily a bad thing. ... Schalansky makes a compelling case that the system is improving. But critics are equally as passionate that it is not. ... Truth is, the jury is still out, notwithstanding Schalansky's trove of arguments in favor of privatization. ... The care of these children is too important to take anything for granted.

The (Junction City) Daily Union on Fort Riley access:
As U.S. representatives go, the 2nd District in Kansas has one who responds quickly and effectively to the concerns of his constituents. Jim Ryun heard the voices of Junction City when Fort Riley began making plans to follow Defense Department directives to implement measures to monitor the presence of unauthorized people on the installation. Step one for Fort Riley ... was to design a system to control vehicle access. For Fort Riley, the very early planning along those lines included thoughts of stopping access to the post from Grant Avenue. ... Even though continued access from Grant Avenue was seen as necessary, the community conceded that the unrestricted access to Fort Riley which everyone has enjoyed for many years was out of the question if Fort Riley was to follow DOD directives. Community leaders went to their congressman, Jim Ryun, to see if he could intercede. Taking the community's concerns to the person in charge of Forces Command installations ... Ryun sold the idea that the Grant Avenue access remain open, though controlled. ... It is not a victory by Junction City nor a surrender by Fort Riley. It is a compromise that, we feel, is in the best interest of both, thanks to the work by our congressman and Fort Riley. The next battle must be waged jointly by Junction City and Fort Riley. They must fight side by side to make the compromise work. Together, we can make it work.

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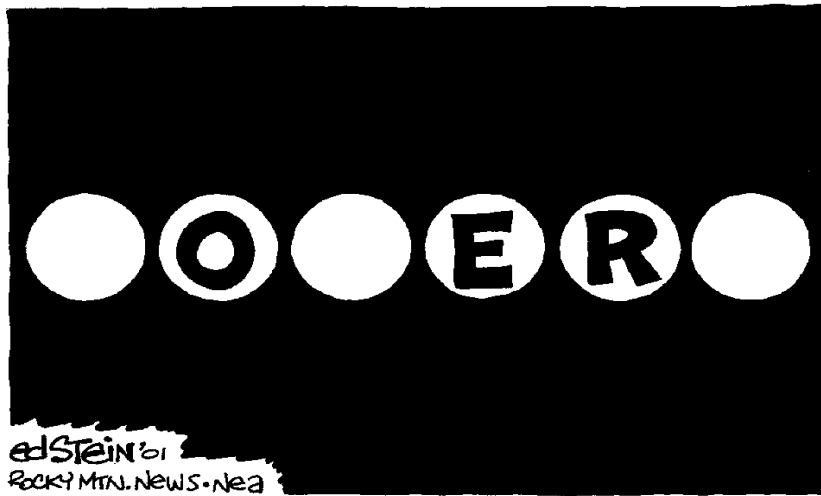
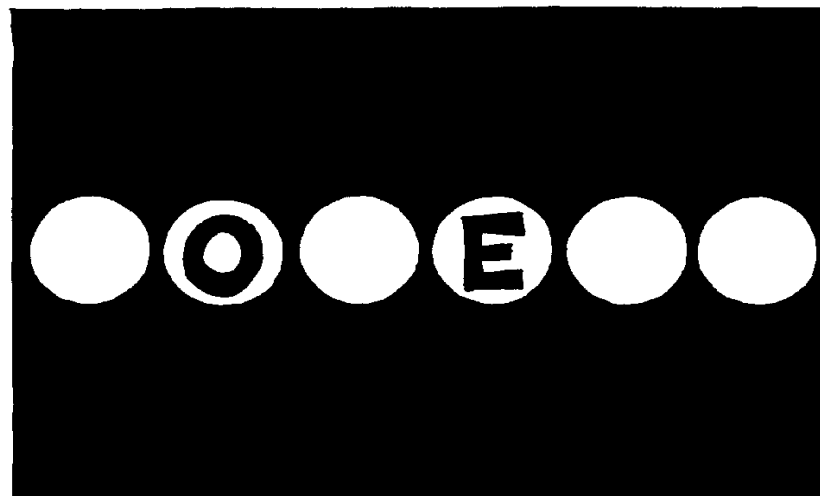
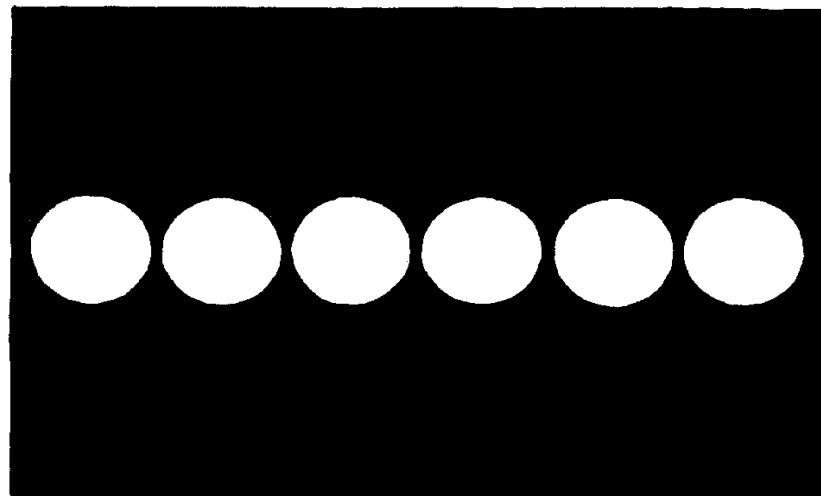
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STEIN '61
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Buy me a souvenir Olympic T-shirt

If you are lucky enough to obtain tickets for beach volleyball at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China, buy me a Tiananmen Square t-shirt.

The beach volleyball matches will be held in this infamous square.

Buy me a Tiananmen Square key chain.

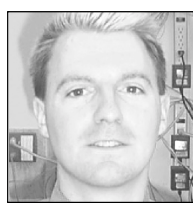
Throughout the Tiananmen Square student-led demonstrations in the spring of 1989, China's communist dictatorship treated the democracy-craving students with arrogance and disrespect. Will they do the same to democracy craving Olympic goers?

Maybe not if you buy a Tiananmen Square coffee cup.

The Chinese government consciously and constantly lies to the people they are supposed to serve. Hmhmhm. That should sound familiar to citizens of this American democracy. The communists also enjoy eliminating their critics. That's why the noise emanating from China is a cacophony of gunfire, handcuffs, whips, and chains, not Olympic cheers.

Obviously, the ever-enlightened International Olympic Committee believes the Chinese culture of oppression is a great example of the Olympic ideas of peace and tolerance. Otherwise why would the committee make Beijing, the Chinese capital — the heart of the communist world — the host of the 2008 Olympics?

So as you bathe in the sun and sand during the volleyball matches please buy me some stupid, expensive, useless trinket that will remind me of what an awful place Tiananmen Square is.



mitch hixson

• the soundgarden

On June 3, 1989, Deng Xiaoping, China's communist leader at the time, called in the People's Liberation Army — quite a name for a tool of oppression — to end student led democracy protests. The army used massively excessive force.

Massacre would be an appropriate word to describe what actually happened. A unit of soldiers fired upon a group of unarmed students trying to block them. As they tried to flee to get out of the line of fire, they were followed, tracked down like dogs, and shot.

Many reports claim when the army surrounded Tiananmen Square, they blatantly ignored supplications from student leaders to let people leave peacefully. Instead students were cut down right at the spots Olympic vendors will be selling pennants, hats, and goofy glasses populating Olympic themes of peace and tranquillity. It makes me sick.

On the morning of June 4, 1989, after the army had reclaimed the square, tanks still fired upon citizens. Red Army patrols recklessly continued to track and kill their unarmed student prey. For the next few days Beijing was a silent city, as citizens were afraid to leave their homes for fear of being targeted.

Remember the famous picture of a single man staring down a column of four tanks? Today it is

used as a symbol of the massacre by showing how one individual, one student, would peacefully stand in the face of his communist fathers and say he didn't agree.

But the photo is misleading because it suggests this sort of standoff was common. In fact, almost everyone who attempted to stand off against army vehicles was run over.

Please buy me an Olympic calendar with pictures of individual achievement and overcoming adversity.

After the blood bath, the Chinese government brazenly lied to defend its actions. They first absurdly claimed to the rest of the world that not a single person had died, contradicting every single foreign media report. Later they revised their count to a few hundred killed. They said most of the dead were soldiers killed by friendly fire.

Soldiers burned all of the bodies, tents, and other evidence, so the true number of deaths will never be known.

This quote by Sir Isaiah Berlin speaks to what I thought we as the United States really stand for, and what the Olympic ideas of individual achievement are about:

"Those who value liberty for its own sake believe that to be free to choose, and not to be chosen for, is an inalienable ingredient in what makes human beings human."

If people in China cannot make the decisions required to be human, why would the Olympics light their fire in Beijing?

Maybe the Chinese will have great sidewalk sales during the Olympics? Please pick me up that t-shirt.

Taking it back



red green

• north of forty

We all need understanding at various times in our lives. But for the average person, compassion is never more appropriate than when you're returning a broken product to a store. You stand there at the customer service counter with a weed whacker in three pieces and a big burn mark on the side of the motor. The clerk asks "What happened?" You say "I don't know," which is a lie, and "It broke," which is obvious. At that moment, you accidentally make eye contact, and both of you are painfully aware of the awful truth. It didn't just break. You broke it using some portion of your stupidity. Now the insensitive, inexperienced part-time, minimum-wage clerk will refer you to the manager, refuse the return, or have you arrested. That's your fault for picking the wrong clerk. You don't want a high school student. You need an older, married person. Someone who's been there. Someone who knows that you are a person at risk. Someone who understands that you have a spouse at home who knows you broke the weed whacker and is going to give you weeks of unrelenting grief if you don't get your money back. Someone who understands that having someone else take the blame is the closest most of us get to a miracle in this life. Someone who realizes that if they give you your money back, you will shop at that store, and only that store, forsaking all others, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, 'til death do us part.

THE HAIR APPARENT

Life has taught me many things, but one of the most surprising has been that your hair is a lot like

your kids. You don't have any at first. Then when you do, there's a period of unmanageability, and it takes a fair bit of greasing to make things go your way. For a few years, they become the center of your universe. Over time, they change and seem less interested in your needs; many of them leave to strike out on their own. Then they're gone, and you have to decide whether you should be dwelling on the trauma of their departure, thinking back to what once was, or act like their absence is just part of the maturing process. Either way, you can't help but blame yourself. But don't. If you truly love something, you have to set it free. That's why bald men make better fathers.

LOWERING THE BAR

Simple pleasures for a middle-aged guy:
— Holding a TV remote — being able to control one thing in his life.
— Eating a meal with no regrets.
— A day when nobody phones him.
— Old pants that still do up.
— Attending the annual staff meeting and not having his name mentioned.
— Being able to remove his shoes at a social function.
— A mall with a hardware store in it.

— Any gasoline engine that starts.
— Opening the fridge and seeing four beers.

ROOT FOR THE HOME TEAM

When you watch sports on television, you see examples of what I would call true fans. These are people who support the home team, no matter what. Oh sure, they might be critical when discussing some of the trades or some of the coaching strategies, but once the game is underway, they are clearly and consistently rooting for the home team. I admire that. In fact, I think it's essential. Maybe we all should apply that same blind faith to our belief in ourselves. Because the game is underway, and each of us is the home team.

QUOTE OF THE DAY: "The expression 'the best things in life are free' is not an invitation to steal."

— Red Green

Red Green is the star of "The Red Green Show," a television series seen in the U.S. on PBS and in Canada on the CBC Network, and the author of "The Red Green Book" and "Red Green Talks Cars: A Love Story."

berry's world

